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SPEECH BY GEETA PASI, U.S. CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES, A.I. AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF U.S. TRADE FAIR

DHAKA, FEBRUARY 27 -- Following is the text of remarks of CDA, a.i. Geeta Pasi at the Opening Ceremony of American Chamber of Commerce Annual U.S. Trade Fair at Sheraton Hotel Ballroom on Wednesday, February 27.

(begin text)

Thank you, Ershad, for your warm welcome, and thank you Special Assistant Mahbub Jamil for joining us today. Colleagues from the Bangladesh and American business communities, my partners from the American Chamber of Commerce, representatives from the media, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. Welcome to the 17th annual U.S. Trade Show in Bangladesh.

The wide range of industries represented by the exhibitors today reflects the breadth and depth of U.S. and Bangladeshi commercial interaction. In areas such as energy production, industrial equipment, banking, research, medical services, education, and relief organizations, the partnership of U.S. and Bangladeshi companies is vital to the economic advancement of this country. I am proud of the commitment of these companies to innovation, fairness, and excellent customer service, all reflected in the loyalty of their customers. I share their belief in the enormous, long-term economic potential of Bangladesh.

Trade links are an essential part of our bilateral relationship. The U.S. Embassy is committed to facilitating these links to foster the success of businesses in Bangladesh. Economic links and growth at all levels of society is the engine of change that gives people the power to improve their lives. This trade show, co-sponsored by the American

Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh and the U. S. Embassy, is an expression of our shared interest and commitment.

American companies and their Bangladeshi partners have a vested interest in the political and economic developments unfolding in this country, and I would like to take a moment to comment on these developments. The Caretaker Government has taken up an ambitious agenda and has faced some difficult challenges. Much of what the government is trying to achieve is critical to the long-term economic health of the economy. The government needs to continue its efforts in a variety of areas, including preparing for the elections, tackling corruption, and safeguarding basic human rights. These efforts are essential to business confidence in Bangladesh, and require the support and participation of the business community.

The government's implementation of the election roadmap, and the commitment of the government to hold elections this year, are vital in boosting investor confidence. A long-term decline in corruption will maintain that confidence, but only if the campaign against corruption is carried out in a fair and transparent manner. While Bangladesh is in a state of emergency, it is important that fundamental human rights are not ignored, including the rights of workers.

I would like to express my appreciation to the American Chamber of Commerce team, its President Syed Ershad, its Executive Board, and its Executive Director, for this opportunity to showcase what American business can achieve in Bangladesh. Not only American business, but Bangladeshi business, media, and government leaders, have all benefited from the Chamber's continuing efforts to spread the word about trade and investment opportunities for U.S. firms in Bangladesh. A growing number of American business executives are aware of Bangladesh and the enormous potential here. AmCham and this annual Trade Show deserve a big part of the credit for this positive development.

To all of you -- organizers, participants, and visitors -- welcome to the U.S. Trade Show 2008!

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